

Institute for the Creative Arts Accountability Profile

Prepared by
Arkansas Department of Education
Charter School Office

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Section 1: Abstract

The Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) Accountability Profile presents a detailed evaluation of this newly established 9–12 open-enrollment charter school during its first two operational years. With an enrollment of 100 students, ICA is operating at 20% of its authorized capacity, indicating significant early challenges in student recruitment and retention. Attendance rates appear generally comparable to state averages, and chronic absenteeism is reported at 6.55%, far below the statewide rate of 21%, suggesting strong engagement among enrolled students. However, several key data elements – teacher retention, certification rates, graduation rates, and lowest 25% growth – are unavailable, limiting the ability to fully assess academic and operational trends.

Academically, ICA earned an F letter grade in 2024–2025, with growth and achievement outcomes that fall substantially below those of the Fort Smith School District and the state. English growth at 47% approaches the “Meeting Standard” threshold, but Math growth lags significantly at 37%. Achievement results across English (42%), Math (13%), and Science (no data) place students well within the “Not Meeting Standard” category, underscoring urgent instructional and systems-level needs. The school’s improvement plan demonstrates a clear understanding of academic priorities – including literacy through the Science of Reading, enhanced RTI systems, and parent engagement – but lacks measurable goals, specific timelines, and clear monitoring structures necessary for effective implementation.

Financially and operationally, the school faces considerable early capacity challenges. ICA shows extremely low ending fund balances (0.01% and -1.3%), negative days cash on hand, and marginal or negative operating margins, placing it well below state benchmarks for financial readiness. While the board conducted multiple financial reviews and formally approved the annual budget, board transparency is limited due to incomplete or outdated meeting minutes. Additionally, the staff recruitment and retention plan functions primarily as a student recruitment strategy and lacks required components related to hiring and retaining educators. As a new school, ICA demonstrates foundational planning efforts but requires immediate strengthening of financial systems, instructional capacity, and governance structures to support sustainable growth.

Section 2: School Summary

Background Information

Location	1101 Riverfront Drive, Fort Smith, AR
Year Opened	2024
Grade Levels	9 - 12
Enrollment Cap	500
Charter Type	Open Enrollment
Mission Statement	Empowering students through an intensive arts and academic curriculum that prepares them for higher education, creative careers, and to become future leaders in the performing and visual arts industries.

Leadership Team

Personnel	Title	School / Organization	Email
Rosilee Russell	Superintendent	Institute for the Creative Arts	rrussell@icafortsmith.org
Michael Johnson	Principal/ Dean	Institute for the Creative Arts	mjohnson@icafortsmith.org
Dr. David Tyson	Board Chair	Institute for the Creative Arts	davidtysonmusic@gmail.com
Amanda Strange	Board Treasurer	Institute for the Creative Arts	Amanda.strange2024@yahoo.com

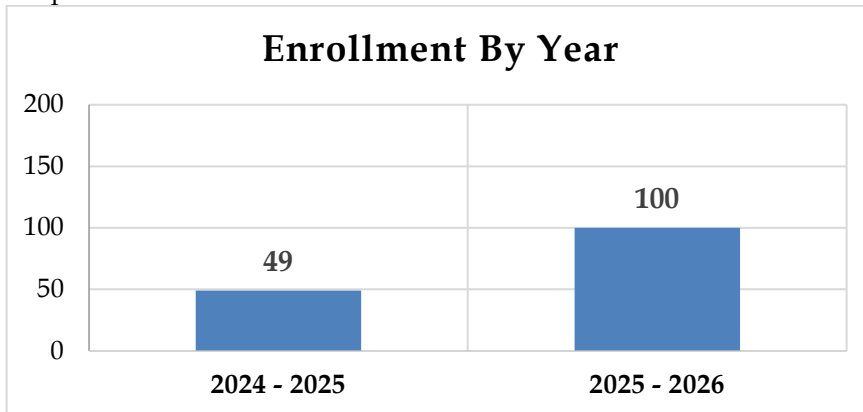
Section 3: Student Enrollment Data

Table 3.0 – 2025 – 2026 Enrollment

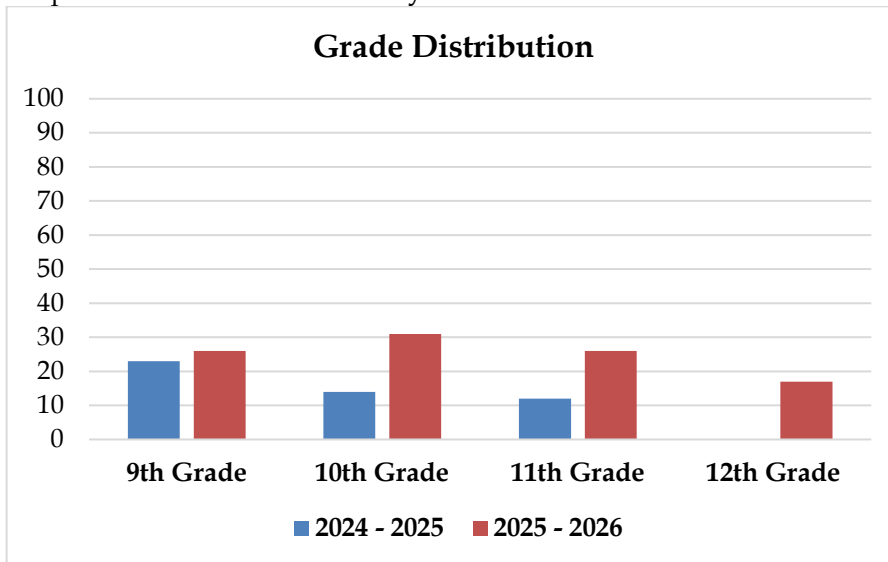
2025 – 2026 Enrollment	Enrollment CAP	Percent of Cap
100	500	20%

Graph 3.0 reports the total enrollment count by year; **Graph 3.1** shows student enrollment by grade; **Graph 3.2** shows student demographics. The data reported was captured from the Arkansas Department of Education's Data Center.

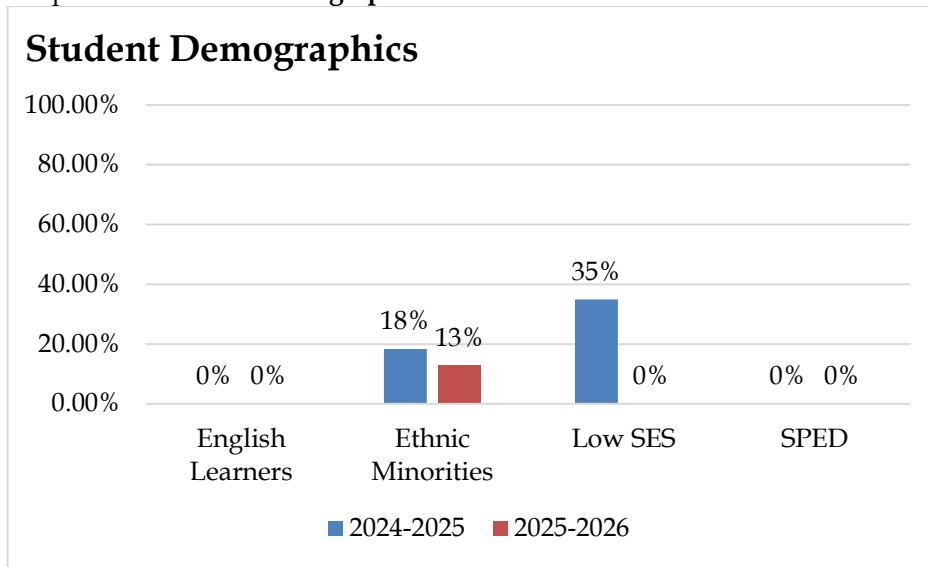
Graph 3.0 - School Enrollment



Graph 3.1 - Student Enrollment by Grade



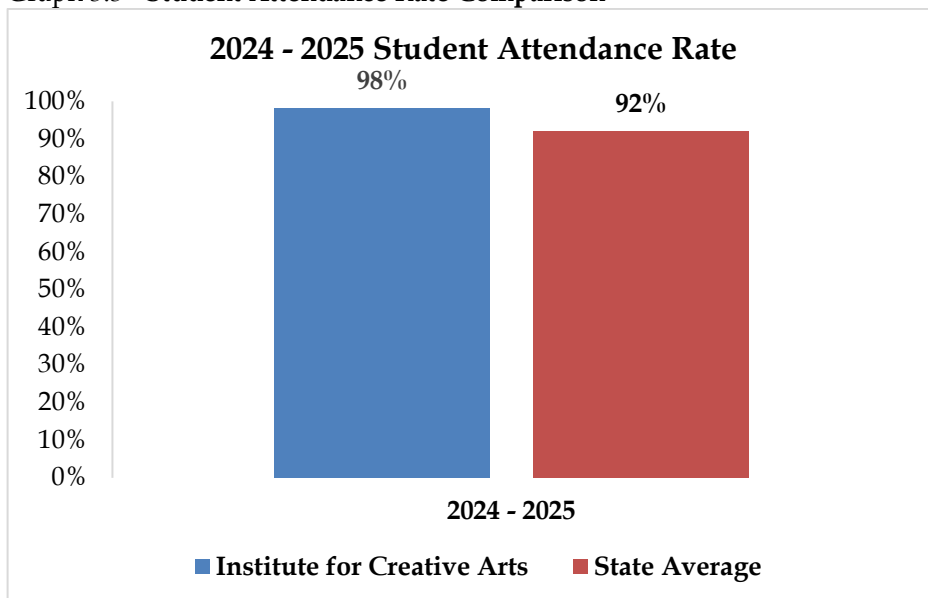
Graph 3.2 - Student Demographics



Student Attendance Rates

Graph 3.3 presents student attendance rates along with a comparison to the state average attendance rate.

Graph 3.3 - Student Attendance Rate Comparison



Section 4: Academic Performance Data

In 2013, the Arkansas legislature passed A.C.A 6-15-2105, requiring the state to implement an A-F grading scale for schools as an indicator of a school's overall academic health. **Table 4.0** the school's letter grade compared to the Fort Smith School District and state.

Table 4.0 - **Letter Grade Comparison**

School	2024-2025
Institute for the Creative Arts	F
Fort Smith School District	C
State average	C

Growth and Achievement Indicators

Growth scores show how many students met their **individual growth goals** on the end-of-year tests. It highlights how well a school helps **all students make progress**, no matter where they start.

Achievement scores show the percentage of students who met or exceeded grade-level expectations on the annual statewide tests in comparison to state average.

Each public charter school is responsible for educating students according to the standards set for all Arkansas public schools. As of the 2024 - 2025 school year, the ATLAS assessment is being used to track both Growth and Achievement for schools.

Table 4.1 - **Growth Score Ranges for the ASPIRE and ATLAS assessments***

	ASPIRE Growth Score Ranges	ATLAS Growth Score Ranges
Exceeding Standard	85% or Higher	51% or Higher
Meeting Standard	80% - 84%	45% - 50%
Approaching Standard	70% - 79%	35% - 44%
Not Meeting Standard	69% or Lower	34% or Lower

Table 4.1.a **Achievement Score Ranges**

	Achievement Score Ranges
Exceeding Standard	Greater than the state average
Meeting Standard	Equal to or within 5% of the state average
Approaching Standard	6 - 10% below the state average
Not Meeting Standard	11% or more below the state average

**Team members from the Charter School Office worked with Public School Accountability team members to create estimated ASPIRE score ranges for comparison to ATLAS Growth Scores.*

Table 4.2 depicts both growth and achievement scores. (note: during the 2021 - 2022 school year, the ASPIRE assessment was utilized for both Growth and Proficiency(Achievement). The ATLAS assessment was first used in the 2023 - 2024 and there were no officially published scores for the 2023 - 2024 school year).

Table 4.2 - Growth and Achievement Scores

Growth - English					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS	47%				51.94%

Growth - Math					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS				37%	52.15%

Achievement - English					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS	42%				35.39%

Achievement - Math					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS				13%	32.88%

Achievement - Science					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS	No Data				36.97%

Achievement - Reading					State Average
	Exceeding Standard	Meeting Standard	Approaching Standard	Not Meeting Standard	
2024-2025 ATLAS	No Data				34.13%

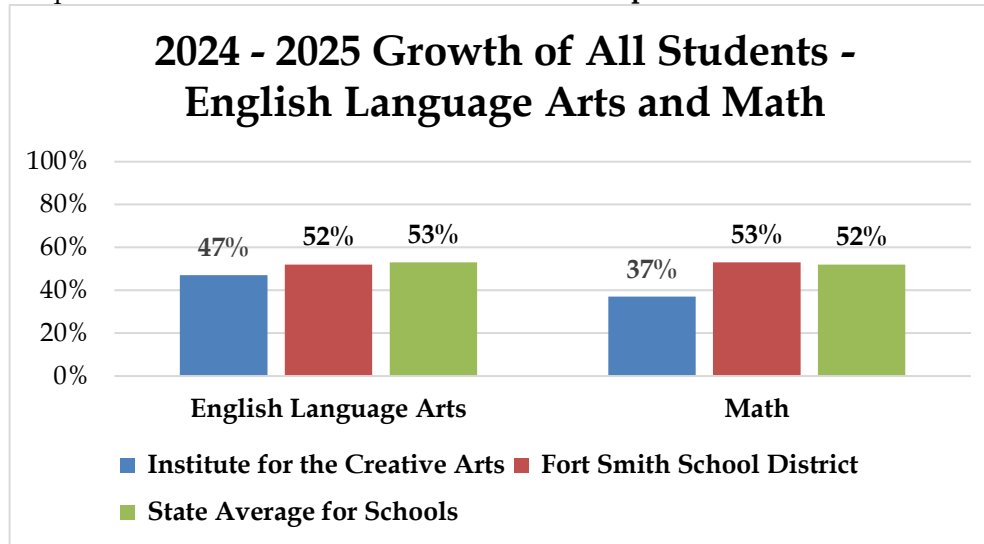
Graduation Rate

No graduation rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

School Growth Comparison Data 2024 – 2025 school year

Graph 4.0.a compares growth of all students at the charter school in English Language Arts and Math with the Fort Smith School District and state average. **Graph 4.1.b** compares growth of the lowest 25% of students at the charter school in English Language Arts and Math with the Fort Smith School District and state average.

Graph 4.0.a – 2024 – 2025 All Students Growth Comparison



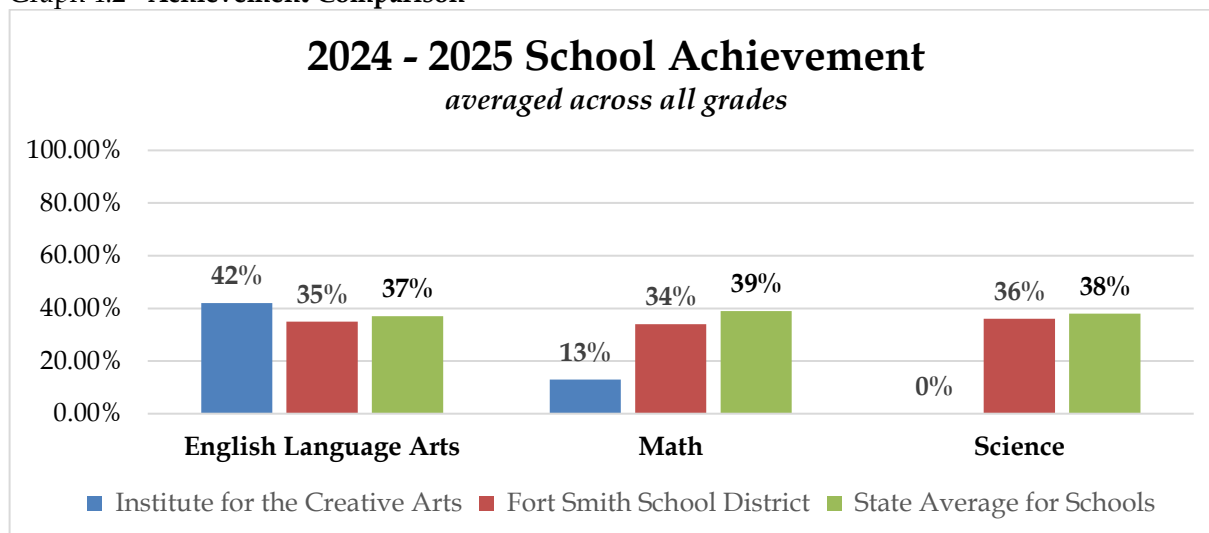
Graph 4.0.b - Lowest 25% Growth Comparison

Not enough growth comparison for the lowest 25% of students data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

School Achievement Comparison Data

Graph 4.2 presents proficiency scores, averaged across all grades, for the charter school in English Language Arts, Math, and Science for the 2024 – 2025 school year compared to the Fort Smith School District and the state average.

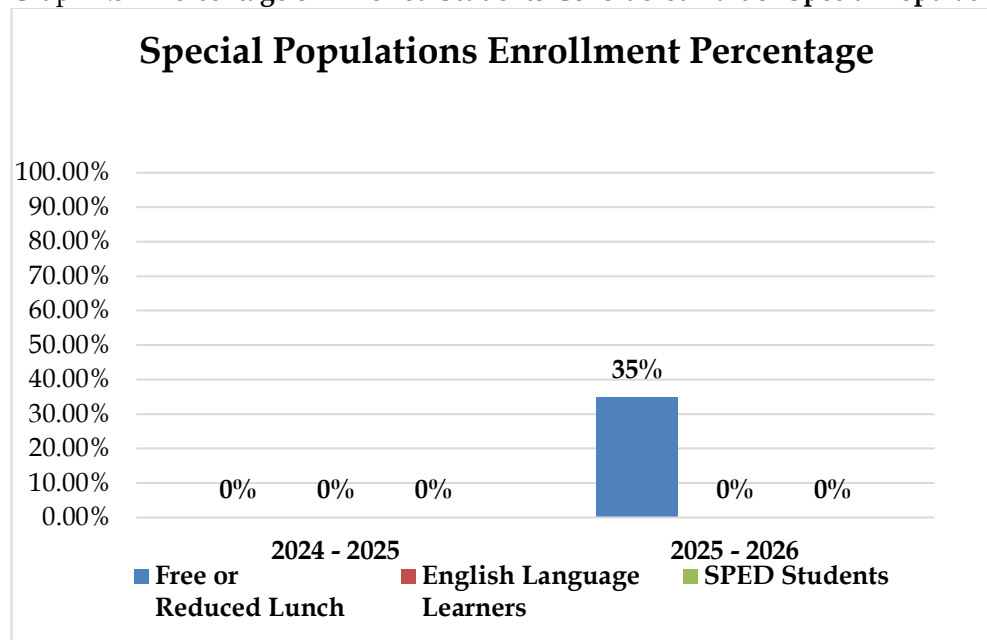
Graph 4.2 - Achievement Comparison



Special Populations

The State of Arkansas' definition of special populations includes students who receive a free or reduced lunch, English language learners, and students identified as SPED. **Graph 4.3** provides the charter school's enrollment percentages of students identified as part of a special population during the past three years.

Graph 4.3 - Percentage of Enrolled Students Considered Part of Special Populations



Learning Services Summary

The Institute for the Creative Arts had limited support from ADE Learning Services.

Enrollment Stability Rates

No enrollment stability rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

Student Discipline

Table 4.3 presents the school's disciplinary history and compares it to the state average.

Table 4.3 - 3-year Disciplinary history

	The Institute for the Creative Arts Whole Number Count	State Average
School Suspensions (In & Out of school)		
2024-2025	No Data	96.03
Expulsions		
2024-2025	No Data	0.81
Chronic Absenteeism		
2024-2025	6.55%	21%

Section 5: Financial Performance Data

Financial information was provided by the Arkansas Department of Education's Finance office in late October 2025. Board Meeting minutes found on the charter school's website revealed that the board conducted multiple financial reviews throughout the year. The annual budget was formally approved on August 27, 2024, during a special session that included approval of Year One financials and salary schedules. Subsequent meetings in December 2024 and January 2025 included budget status reviews, cash flow projections, reserve fund planning, and review of financial management systems, demonstrating ongoing fiscal oversight.

Financial Metrics

Table 5.0 provides definitions used for categories, while **Table 5.1** provides data for the charter school based on the Financial Performance rubric sections provided by ADE Finance (1. Essential Financial Readiness, 2. General Financial Readiness, 3. Financial Sustainability).

Table 5.0 – Performance Metrics' Category Definitions

Category	Meets	Does Not Meet	Falls Far Below
<i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i>	Greater than 8%	Between 8 – 6%	Below 6%
<i>Days Cash on Hand</i>	Greater than 60 days	30 – 60 days	Less than 30 days
<i>Operating Margin</i>	Equal to or greater than 1	Between 1 – 0.05	School demonstrates a negative Margin
<i>Unrestricted Fund Balance</i>	Greater than or equal to 8.33%	Between 8.33 - 7.33%	Less than 7.33%
<i>Enrollment Stability</i>	Greater than or equal to 90%	Between 89 – 80%	Less than 79%
<i>Fiscal Management & Oversight</i>	Yes , clear signs of the board meeting, discussing, and acting on quarterly reviews and/ or addressing financial issues. Also, a fiscal audit has been performed each operational year and is discussed within the board.		No , there are clear gaps in board meetings, no clear discussion, and/or acting on quarterly reviews. Also, there are clear gaps in fiscal audits being performed. No clear actions or discussion have been undergone

Table 5.1 - **Financial Performance for Institute for the Creative Arts**

Color Legend	Meets	Does Not Meet	Falls Far Below
	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026	
<i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i>	0.01%	1.3%	
<i>Days Cash on Hand</i>	0.00	- 4.67	
<i>Operating Margin</i>	0.00	- 0.02	
<i>Unrestricted Fund Balance %</i>	0.00%	- 1.28%	
<i>Enrollment Stability %</i>	No Data	204%	
<i>Fiscal Management & Oversight</i>	No Data	No Data	

Financial Data

Table 5.2 - **Financial Data for the charter school**

Topics	2024-2025 Actual	2025-2026 Budgeted
<i>Beginning Balance</i>	\$0.00	\$8,279.98
<i>Revenue</i>	\$1,067,950.78	\$2,173,689.86
<i>Expenditures</i>	\$1,059,670.80	\$2,210,264.97
<i>Ending Balance</i>	\$8,279.98	(-\$28,295.13)
<i>Ending Balance % of Revenue</i>	0.01%	- 1.3%

Section 6: Operational Performance Review

This section reviews the charter school's compliance with applicable laws, enrollment and recruitment practices, and school improvement plans. The data assists in ensuring accountability and allows ADE to support continuous improvement in charter schools. Additionally, the information aids ADE's Charter School Office in deciding whether to recommend that the Charter Authorizing Panel renews the charter contract.

School Compliance Summary

Currently, the charter school has one standing flagging actions for Standard 4-D.1 (Employment of Classroom Teachers). The school provided a School Improvement Plan that included relevant strategies; however, including more specificity would strengthen the plan.

Charter School Board

The Board meeting schedule for the current school year, meeting agendas and minutes are not easily accessible. Minutes were last uploaded to the website for the January 2025 meeting.

However, board meeting agendas are posted for October 2025 – the only minutes available for the current school year.

Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan

The document outlines an extensive plan for **student** recruitment for the Institute for the Creative Arts, leveraging its strong relationship with CSA and using a wide range of outreach and marketing strategies. It describes plans for community meetings, social media engagement, print advertising, radio and television appearances, and targeted outreach to families and community groups. The Institute highlights CSA's reach into more than 30 schools as a significant advantage and identifies CSA families, donors, and stakeholders as early partners in generating interest.

While the recruitment strategy is robust for attracting students, it does not address staff recruitment or retention – elements that are essential for a complete workforce plan. No goals, actions, or metrics are included for hiring qualified teachers or administrators, supporting them once hired, or ensuring long-term retention. As written, the document functions solely as a student marketing plan.

To meet the expectations of a staff recruitment and retention plan, substantial additions would be needed to outline staffing goals, recruitment sources, professional supports, staff culture, compensation strategies, and mechanisms for evaluating progress. Without these components, the document does not address the core functions required to attract and retain a strong, stable educator workforce.

Teacher Retention Rates

No teacher retention rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

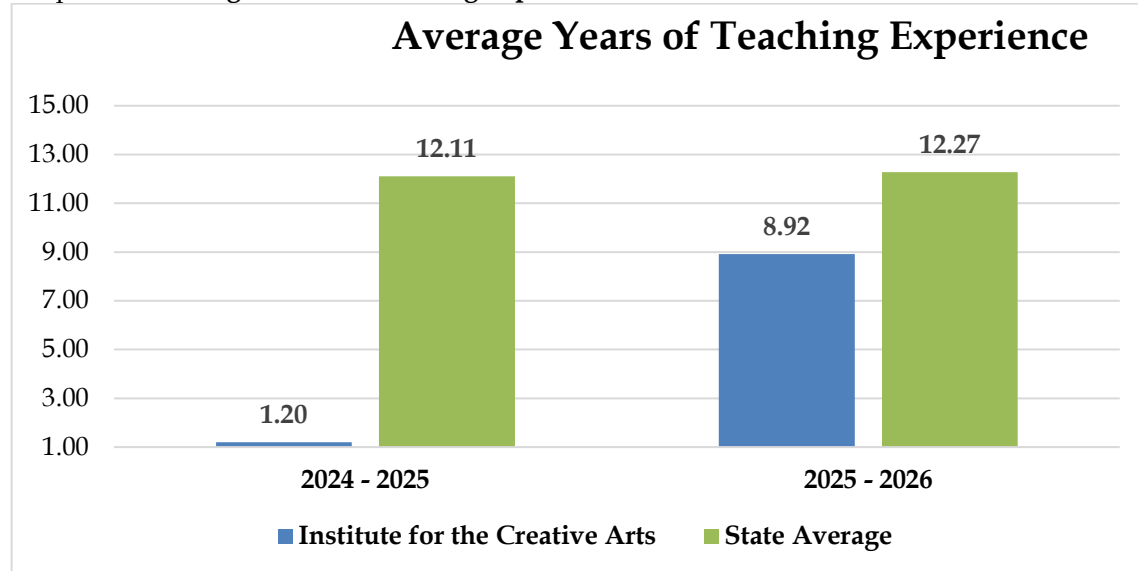
Teacher Certification Rates

No teacher certification rate data was available for the Institute for the Creative Arts at the time of report creation.

Average Teaching Experience

Graph 6.2 presents the charter school's average years of teaching experience compared to the state average.

Graph 6.2 – Average Years of Teaching Experience



School Improvement Plan

The School-Level Improvement Plan for the Institute for the Creative Arts (ICA) outlines a clear vision and mission centered on preparing students for success through rigorous academics and arts integration. The plan identifies key student needs using assessment and attendance data and pairs these needs with appropriate initial actions, such as enhanced monitoring, targeted interventions, and teacher collaboration. Schoolwide priorities include improving literacy through Science of Reading strategies, strengthening math and science achievement, developing a robust Response to Intervention (RTI) system, and increasing parent involvement. These priorities are aligned with AdvancED standards, emphasizing continuous improvement and data-driven practices.

The plan provides a variety of actionable steps supported by instructional tools, structured team meetings, and specialized supports for struggling learners. It also highlights efforts to improve communication and parental engagement through meetings, surveys, and expanded PTA involvement. The inclusion of the DESE Plan of Support (page 5) demonstrates a commitment to leveraging external expertise to improve instruction, reading interventions, and dyslexia services.

However, while the plan contains meaningful actions, it would be strengthened by incorporating specific, measurable goals, clearly defined timelines, and designated personnel responsible for each action. Establishing explicit benchmarks for reading growth, math proficiency, RTI progress, parent participation, and student engagement would increase the plan's effectiveness. Adding monitoring and evaluation procedures would also ensure that ICA can track progress and adjust strategies as needed. Overall, the document provides a strong foundation but needs greater specificity to function as a fully developed school improvement plan.

Section 7: Executive Summary

Academic Performance

The Institute for the Creative Arts received an **F** rating in its first full year, reflecting significant gaps in academic performance. Growth outcomes were mixed: **English growth at 47%** approaches proficiency expectations, while **Math growth at 37%** falls well within “Not Meeting Standard.” Achievement scores indicate severe underperformance, with **42% proficiency in English** and **only 13% in Math**, both substantially below state averages. Science and Reading achievement data were unavailable. No graduation rate data exist due to the school’s newness. The school’s improvement plan outlines appropriate priorities – literacy, RTI development, parent engagement, and improved communication – but lacks measurable benchmarks, responsible parties, and defined progress monitoring. Overall, instructional systems are early in development and require significant strengthening to achieve meaningful gains.

Financial Performance

Financial indicators place ICA in a high-risk category. Ending fund balances of **0.01%** (2024–25) and **-1.3%** (2025–26) fall far below the minimum 6–8% threshold. **Days cash on hand** are reported as **0** and **-4.67**, signaling severe liquidity shortfalls and fiscal instability. Operating margins are flat or negative, and unrestricted fund balances are also below required levels. While the board engaged in multiple financial reviews – including budget adoption, cash flow monitoring, and reserve planning – board minutes are limited and difficult to access, reducing fiscal transparency. The financial data reflect a school in its infancy struggling to establish stable financial practices and adequate reserves for sustainability.

Operational Performance

Operational performance shows mixed compliance. ICA currently has one flag for **Standard 4-D.1 (Employment of Classroom Teachers)** and limited availability of board minutes, with the last accessible minutes posted for January 2025. Teacher retention and certification data are unavailable, and the staff recruitment and retention plan does not meet ADE requirements, functioning instead as a student recruitment plan without goals or actions for educator hiring and retention. The School Improvement Plan demonstrates foundational planning but lacks specificity, timelines, measurable goals, and a detailed monitoring structure. Despite these gaps, the school remains compliant with basic accreditation standards and is actively developing systems to support continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS DEFICIENCIES

Academic Recommendations

- Establish clear, measurable academic goals aligned to ATLAS expectations, including benchmarks for literacy, math, RTI progress, and subgroup performance.
- Implement structured tiered intervention systems (MTSS/RTI) with biweekly progress monitoring and fidelity checks.
- Provide targeted professional development in Science of Reading practices, conceptual math instruction, and data-driven instruction.
- Develop systems for monitoring teacher effectiveness and coaching cycles to ensure instructional consistency.

Financial Recommendations

- Develop a **financial stabilization plan** to increase fund balances and liquidity, targeting at least 30 days cash on hand within 12 months.
- Improve financial transparency by posting complete, up-to-date written board minutes documenting fiscal decisions and budget adoption.
- Monitor spending and revenue alignment monthly to prevent negative ending balances and support long-term sustainability.
- Implement multiyear financial forecasting to ensure the school can support enrollment growth and future facilities or staffing needs.

Operational Recommendations

- Revise the staff recruitment and retention plan to include hiring goals, retention benchmarks, recruitment strategies, and professional support systems.
- Improve public access to governance information, including agendas, minutes, and financial reports.
- Enhance the School Improvement Plan with timelines, success indicators, responsible personnel, and documented monitoring processes.
- Address Standard 4-D.1 compliance by ensuring all classroom teachers hold the required credentials and that hiring processes reflect state law.